

Decolonizing Our Curriculum

CAHSS JEDI Committee All College Retreat Presentation
September 18, 2023

Who are the JEDI Committee?

What do we do and
why are we here?

- ❑ We serve as resources rather than pushing for a mandate.
- ❑ The committee is faculty-driven and not dean-driven - we identified areas of work we want to focus on and propose to the Dean.
- ❑ We recognize the work done by CAHSS colleagues in the college in the area of social justice, equity and inclusion - we are not the only ones who do this work.
- ❑ We practice cultural humility and would like this to spread in CAHSS.

Who are the JEDI Committee?

What do we do and
why are we here?

JEDI Committee Co-Chairs

Margo Hill

Pui-Yan Lam

Angela Schwendiman

JEDI Committee Members

Kate Crane

Sara Goff

Kassahun Kebede

Malcolm Pelles

Erin Ross

Jason Sculley

Jacki Hedlund Tyler

Time is tough - but there is “never a
good time to do JEDI work”

Coming Soon!

Recommended Reading -
“Decolonising the Curriculum - How Do I get Started”



CAHSS
JEDI

College of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences
Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

NOTE: not yet live, but will be in the near future

<https://www.ewu.edu/cahss/cale/jedi/>

Overview of the Importance of Decolonizing Curriculum

For our students from historically marginalized groups, feeling they belong at EWU is not just about interpersonal relationships - they also want their worldviews and experiences reflected in the curriculum.

The history of our disciplines is connected to Western colonization - there are movements in the US and globally calling for decolonization of higher education in general.

We also acknowledge that decolonizing higher education takes more than just decolonizing our curriculum.

The Difference Between Diversifying vs. Decolonizing Curriculum

Diversifying

Add knowledge about diverse populations or from authors from diverse backgrounds into the curriculum

Does not call into question “overarching white worldview” in our academic discipline

Does not challenge the status quo in terms of what knowledge is valued and what knowledge is not in a discipline

Decolonizing

Aim not to just “add” onto the existing body of knowledge in a discipline

Challenge the “overarching white world view” in our academic discipline

Critically examine the production of knowledge within a discipline especially its link to Western colonization

Provide students with tools to critically examine knowledge in their own academic discipline

The Difference Between Diversifying vs. Decolonizing Curriculum

Diversifying

Adding colorful sprinkles to a cake made of unhealthy, harmful ingredients to make it look pretty

Decolonizing

Revolutionizing the cake recipe by taking out the unhealthy, harmful ingredients and replacing them with ones that are healthy

... and making it even more delicious

How might you envision
decolonizing your curriculum?

EXAMPLE - Major in Classics (Princeton University)

“To articulate a clear, forward-looking, and inclusive vision for our field. **Once devoted to the appreciation of Greece and Rome as exemplary cultures (often seen in what was perceived to be their “splendid isolation”), classicists now study a broad range of synchronic and diachronic relationships and pay close attention to exclusions.** In terms of synchronic relationships, we investigate, for example, how ideas and forms of expressions circulated between Greece, Egypt, and the Near East; to what extent the Romans and their North African enemies shared the same cultural models; how ancient people related to the natural and built environment; and how the beginnings of literature compare across the world. In terms of diachronic perspectives, we investigate, using a variety of theoretical frameworks, how classical texts have been transmitted and received in later cultures. **We specifically consider how the cultures of Greece and Rome have been instrumentalized, and have been complicit, in various forms of exclusion, including slavery, segregation, white supremacy, Manifest Destiny, and cultural genocide.”**

Things to Keep in Mind

Synchronic Relationships - Look for similarities in cultural models.

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Diachronic Relationships - Examine ways stories have been told, passed on, and received.

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Self Scrutiny - Look for uses of culture to dominate and exclude certain people.

- The developments briefly outlined here - that is to say: interdisciplinary expansion, diachronically and synchronically, and self-scrutiny in terms of historical exclusions - inform not only our research but our undergraduate and graduate curriculum, starting with our new gateway course *What is a Classic?* which will be taught for the first time in Spring 2020-21.

Activity Time!

Group Exercise - Evaluating a “Sample” Syllabus

12 Tables - 12 Groups

Instructions have been provided (print outs) at each table.

- Instructions
- Syllabus for *Women in the Ancient World*
- Recorder Sheet
- Article

Each group/table will have to appoint a Recorder to capture the group’s answers.

- Please feel free to write individual notes on the Instructions for us to collect.

- 20 Minutes -

Please submit your group's Recorder sheet and any notes.

Decolonizing Our Own Perceptions of A Course

To decolonize a course, we need to ask ourselves:

- Why did I include the materials I have included for my course? Where did I learn about what is important and what is not important to cover in that course?
 - And if we do inherit curriculum, what problems might continue to be present?
- Are my strengths overshadowing (even if unintentionally) the needs of the curriculum as a whole?
- What are the gaps in our own knowledge from our graduate training that was built on the colonial version of knowledge?
- Whose stories, knowledge, and contributions have been told and validated in our own discipline that we may not automatically recognize?
 - One step further, what then might be left out of our discipline?

Ultimately, decolonizing a curriculum takes more than changing a few classes.

Next Steps on Decolonizing Our Curriculum

JEDI Committee will get feedback from CAHSS faculty to develop a plan for the Summer Institute for Decolonizing Curriculum

JEDI Committee members will work on finding resources to organize the Summer Institute and pay faculty to work on curriculum changes in Summer 2024

Remember to Read - **“Decolonising the curriculum – how do I get started?”**

Keep An Eye Out for the **JEDI website!**